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ABSTRACT

The need to prepare students for intercultural communication and understanding has stimulated interest in global studies. Within the community college, global studies have been encouraged, but also limited by uncertainties in funding and resource commitment. In this period of confusion, it is important that college anthropology instructors adopt teaching strategies that are responsive, affirmative, and flexible. While lectures, readings, and class discussions establish a critical fund of information, other activities should be utilized to expand the student's role in the educational process. Students should share in planning course structure and the use of classroom time. Media, such as documentary films and school- or students-produced videotapes, can be immediate and powerful resources for understanding culture. Simulation games are effective in sparking interest and fostering an awareness of social interaction, cultural understanding, and a global perspective. Students with family and job responsibilities can be served through experiential learning activities such as independent research, work-study, service-learning projects, and field work research studies. The cultural awareness possible through study abroad can be made available for students who cannot travel through the internationalization of the curricula. These creative strategies for cultural understanding can function within current resources and financial constraints. (KL)

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NEW DIRECTIONS IN SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY: PUSHING BACK THE CHAIRS, OPENING THE DOORS

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New Directions in Social and Cultural Anthropology --
Pushing back the Chairs, Opening the Doors

- Beverly B. Brown -

A perplexing mix of boom and gloom marks the mood of anthropology teachers as they probe the future of community colleges. What will the nineteen-eighties hold? How do we prepare for the twenty-first century? The Presidential Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies recently attempted to provide some answers in its call for the renewal and expansion of global studies. Stressing the need to educate students for life on a shrinking planet, it urged that skills in intercultural communication and understanding become priority goals in college classrooms and boardrooms. The Commission report warned that there was diminishing "American competence to understand and deal successfully with other peoples in a world of flux," that there were shocking inadequacies in intercultural awareness "at a time when the resurgent forces of nationalism and of ethnic and linguistic consciousness so directly affect global realities."[1]

The momentum of this drive for 'international literacy" is drawing strength from many quarters, including the Council on Learning which has mounted a largescale project ("Education and the World View") designed to measure the extent of global perspectives in college curricula and the adequacy of American students' intercultural understanding. According to its newsletter, Update II (Spring 1980), the Council is busily conducting

a national survey of seniors' and freshmen's knowledge of the world, organizing conferences, advocating curricular strategies, and evaluating successful programs that encourage international awareness.[2]

Mounting calls for an expansion of global studies plus increasing awareness of community colleges' potential role in breaking the parochialism of American education have generated almost heady expectations of growth, curriculum changes and additional funds for intercultural studies. This new urgency has obviously heartened anthropologists who have such heavy stakes and responsibilities in efforts to internationalize curricula and expand intercultural sensitivity. Unfortunately conviction is not necessarily matched by cash or institutional commitment on many compuses. Any tentative optimism also smacks right into the sobering report from the Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education. Its grim prognostications of diminishing enrollments, moneys and jobs are accompanied by pessimistic previews of aging, embittered faculty; beleaguered decreasingly competent administrators; and consumer-oriented, powerful, peripatetic students. This is the critical chill factor forecast by virtually every report on the future of American education and often in such dismal terms that the Carnegie report sounds cheerful.

Everyone expects major change, but there is still uncertainty about its speed and direction. Like all internationalists, Anthropologists must now sense a perplexing bind. On the one hand,

global studies seem on the threshold of growth, on the other the college environment seems on the brink of dislocation and diminution In a period of confusion and crisis-thinking, it is urgent that we adopt teaching strategies that are responsive, affirmative, flexibile. To respond by "digging in" will be extremely damaging: to promote once again a sense of "them" and "us" in the classroom will be destructive. Advocates of that attitude certainly exist; for, as the Carnegie Council reports, some fearful academics foresee students who will "increasingly guide institutional developments toward lower standards of academic conduct and quality. The counterculture of the students overwhelms the high culture of the academics. Students drop in and out; now here, now there."[3] This adversary, resentful view of educational change highlights the great need for sustained faculty development, maintenance of standards and morale, and forging a sense of community at community colleges.

One affirmative step would be to approach the classroom as a co-op for teachers and students. It should be a scene of dynamic dialogue, an arena of action and interaction. To foster receptivity to the world, anthropology teachers should help students build bridges from the familiar and local to more distant cultural scenes. Obviously lectures, readings and class discussions establish a critical fund of information for cross-cultural comparison, but learning is enhanced by expanding the

students' role in the educational process. They should share in shaping the course as well as dividing the time for group or independent research projects, film-viewing and game-playing. This converts the classroom into a more lively place, opens doors to the outside and addresses more effectively the diversity of student learning styles.

For years, the media has provided one of the most standard but vital means of expanding the global view from the classroom. As budgets are timmed to the bone, however, documentary films are becoming an increasingly endangered and rare species on campus grounds. Perhaps the need to exercise severe selectivity will lead to much greater care in the utilization of this rich learning resource. Too frequently films have served as substitute teachers rather than as educational aids. They require much more than reel time. Such dense, fine documentaries as Robert Gardner's Dead Birds and Rivers of Sand, Napoleon Chagnon's Yanomamo series (including the popular The Feast and A Man Called 'Bee') or Trobriand Cricket must be approached over prepared ground and allowed ample post-viewing discussion time. The penalty for penury is mounting rather than diminishing student ethnocentrism. In this regard, it is also fruitful to bring the class back home through film. For example, explorations of religious belief and ritual often gain by the inclusion of The Holy Ghost People, a plain and powerful study of pentecostal faith in Appalachia, or Jesus Freaks, an examination of the resurgence of cults and fundementalist Christian movements in the

U. S. Similarly a study of class and conflict becomes more immediate and tense if students view Grapes of Wrath or Harlan County,U.S.A.

Of course there are many other ways to harness technology to the service of education. One easy step in that direction is to call on a college's videotaping services to record televised news programs, commercials, or segments of popular shows. These tapes represent valuable audio-visual aids in studying the media and American culture or the difficulties of intercultural communication. To make it even more personal and direct, students may be encouraged to film and record action within their own college or community environment, and then to examine their production for its cultural content. The camera, taperecorder, videotape machine should become familiar classroom artifacts.

An increasingly popular addition to teaching repertoires is the simulation game which can strengthen an activist approach to understanding cultural differences, cooperation and conflict. Although some of us only talk a good game, simulations can serve as challenging instructional aids. Games still seem to be discussed more than played: a lingering trend of teacher hesitancy that may be due in part to continuing questions about the actual educational benefits of such activities. It should be noted that simulations probably do not increase students' mastery of facts and may not even expand their problem-solving skills. But the experience often stirs interest, dramatizes issues and fosters deeper awareness of social interaction and processes. Another significant factor impeding the introduction of game-

playing to the classroom is the rigid limitation on time and funds available to teachers, who are often locked into a schedule of fifty or seventy-five minute classes that meet two or three times weekly. This severely narrows the choice of games.

give an extreme example: "Crisis on Campus", although seemingly relevant, is out of reach since it costs $200.00 per use plus $250.00 for a trained facilitator and requires ten hours of group preparation plus a minimum of six hours playing time.

On the other hand, there are numerous simulations that require only modest funds and time and have received strong endorsement from teachers and students. One of the older but still most popular and exciting games is "Starpower"; a simulation placing participants in a low-mobility, three-tiered society where upward mobility depends on gaining wealth through trade. The rules are simple, the action fast, the involvement invariably complex. Since resources are unevenly divided at the outset and the power of the wealthy increases at every stage, the game frequently leads to strong feelings of hostility and frustration. But the intensity of this experience establishes an important base for examining questions of power, conflict and altruism. Another plus for "Starpower" is its negligible expense, since an instructor can easily produce sufficient quantities of "triangles," "circles," and "squares" for trading.

Of course there are many other simulations designed to expand our understanding of culture. For example, "Dig" is a largescale but easily segmented game that divides students into

two teams assigned the tasks of creating two cultures, designing representational artifacts of those cultures, then attempting to describe and interpret the other team's culture, and finally exploring American society in terms of their new understanding of cultural patterns. In addition to such wide-ranging simulations, there are modest, brief exercises that center on role-playing as a way of exposing essential elements of culture, such as "The Mocking Bird" which involves a line-up of students back-to-back in two rows. Two kinds of finger food are passed down each line, then the participants turn around, face each other toe-to-toe, eat the food and discuss it with their partner. This shared often discomfiting experience usually leads to animated discussions of cultural differences in our notions of personal space, social distance and non-verbal communication. Another effective, quick exercise is "The Ostrich" in which ten to fifteen students are blindfolded, given a number, and instructed to line up in ascending numerical order without speaking. Their need to communicate in a situation where they are deprived of sight and verbal language frequently induces frustration and annoyance but alerts participants and onlookers to cross-cultural communication barriers.

There are also a large number of games directed at global issues, reflecting the long preoccupation of simulation affecionados with international relations. Among those requiring only moderate resources and having a clarity of design and purpose, there

are "Baldicer" which forces players to confront food shortage crises and the unequal division of the world's vital resources, "Guns or Butter" which engages students in team action as countries dedicated to improving their security and welfare while contending with questions of nationalism and internationalism, and "Crisis" which similarly divides players into teams representing countries struggling for access to a fictional but essential life-supporting mineral. In all of these play encounters, conflict and cooperation are involved in the processes of strategic thinking, negotiating, coalition-building, and role-playing. In each game, issues of power, war, underdevelopment, exploitation and economic interdependence are raised.[4]

Although simulations and role-playing exercises will undoubtedly become increasingly familiar educational tools in the anthropology classroom, students will also be leaving that classroom much more frequently in an effort to learn by doing. Experiential learning is essential for gaining an understanding of anthropological research methods and subject matter. In addition, independent research, work-study and service-learning projects are more flexible and better suited to the needs of students with major commitments to jobs and families. This shift in educational energies should be accompanied by the recognition that a diversity of life styles and experiences may serve as a vital source of cultural information for the independent learner. The possibility of studying Anthropology is not limited to 9:00 - 9:50, Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

College doors must be thrown open for an exploration of community life, although the extent of individualized research should mesh with instructional and student needs. In many circumstances, a group experience is an invaluable adventure in shared learning. There are many research possibilities, from mini-projects such as observing child-teacher interaction in the college daycare center in order to study socialization practices; collecting graffiti as a means of examining cultural norms and rule-breaking; participant-observation in an intramural basketball game as a way of appraching ritual action and essential American values. The list is long.[5]

Mini-projects may lead to larger research projects. For example, the class can be divided into teams to study their own college as a community, examining questions of status, authority, sex roles, communication, maintenance of order, leisure activities. Such endeavors develop into critical group learning experiences as students, through cooperative interaction with their peers, devise research strategies and apportion tasks. Engaging in interviews, participant-observation, surveys, analyses of college and county statistics, filming and taping, they practice a variety of fieldwork research methods. Students also gain considerable knowledge about a cultural environment in which they have invested valuable time and resources. The end result is not only greater understanding of the culture concept and research methodologies, but often strong reactions to their

findings.Disgruntlement with institutional arrangements and attendant demands for educational reform may be channeled into a close encounter with critical, perennial issues in anthropology. Can cultural research be neutral? should it strive to be? is non-involvement ethical? how to apply the new knowledge? who are the constituents?

In addition to such group projects, independent study will probably flourish in the coming decade. The advantages are multiple, since individualized learning responds to a wide range of diverse student needs, adds flexibility and variety to the curriculum, and encourages students to learn through their experience as workers, family members or county residents. But there are costs. Independent study is most effective educationally when mentoring is frequent and involved, so it necessitates an ample commitment of one-on-one time by faculty members. The student should be able to count on help in arranging field assignments, in benefiting from college connections with local programs and agencies, and in gaining work experience that may not be exclusively volunteer service but carry the possibility of pay and other job benefits.

In a number of community colleges, efforts to develop cultural awareness and intercultural communication skills have led from the local community connections mentioned above to international or inter-regional programs that offer students the opportunity to study outside their own counties. For example,

the College Consortium for International Studies, a union of thirty colleges and universities in the U.S., coordinates more than sixty academic programs in twelve different countries. Their offerings, which are primarily designed for first or second year college students, vary in length from two semesters to a few weeks and provide a number of educational options from formal, structured courses to service-learning and independent study. Of course numerous other opportunities for credit-bearing work or study abroad exist, and the network of information among community colleges is expanding in order to spread the word on international research and living possibilities for both students and teachers.[6]

Although the study abroad experience usually leads to an invigorating growth in self-awareness and cultural awareness, most students will never be able to seize the opportunity because they are bound to jobs, homes and meager resources. So it is imperative to match support for these international connections with the imaginative construction of regional learning opportunities and the internationalizing of college curricula. The world must be brought to the students as well as the students to the world. The larger educational promise lies in expanding an appreciative sense of cultural diversity within local communities. Anthropology must be personalized as we seek to discover what it means to be human, to be culture-builders. We need to develop a creative, cross-cultural learning cycle built on the premise that the better we understand our own culture, the better prepared we are to learn about others; the more we understand others, the better we will know ourselves.

NOTES

1. Strength through Wisdom: A critique of U. S. Capability . A Report to the President from the President's Commission in Foreign Language and International Studies (November 1979), 5.
2. Council on Learning, Update II (Spring 1980). For additional information write Robert Black,Project Director, Council on Learning, NBW Tower, New Rochelle, N. Y. 10801.
3. "The Carnegie Council's Final Report," The Chronicle of Higher Education (January 28, 1980), 9-10.
4. For a description of hundreds of games and their producers, see David Zuckerman and Robert E. Horn, The Guide to Simulations/ Games for Education and Training (Lexington, Mass.: Information Resources, Inc., 1973) and G. I. Gibbs, Handbook of Games and Simulation Exercises (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage, 1974).
5. Helpful suggestions for research projects are provided in Julia G. Crane and Michael V. Angrosino, Field Projects in Anthropology: A Student Handbook (Morristown, N.J.: General Learning Press, 1974) and David E. Hunter and MaryAnn B. Foley, Doing Anthropology: A Student-Centered Approach to Cultural Anthropology (New York: Harper and Row, 1976).
6. Transitions(a seasonal periodical) , and the Council on International Educational Exchage's Whole World Handbook, and John Garraty, Lily von Klemperer, and Cyril J. H. Taylor (eds), The New Guide to Study Abroad, 1978-1979 (N. Y.: Harper and Row, 1978) review work, study and travel opportunities. Eric Kocher, International Jobs (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1979)

surveys career opportunities, internships and traineeships in the international field. Walter T. Brown (ed.), The CISP International Studies Funding Book (New York: Council for Intercultural Studies and Programs, 1980, 2nd ed.) reviews funding opportunites for institutions, faculty and students in the field of international/intercultural studies. Community college teachers recently organized the Society for Anthropology in Community Colleges and began publishing a newsletter that reviews trends in the field and notes travel/study opportunities for faculty and students. For further information on SACC, contact Broward Community College Central, Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33314.

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